

99-200

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California State Senate

SENATOR
 DICK MONTEITH

TWELFTH SENATORIAL DISTRICT



JUL 23 1999

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July 22, 1999

Mr. Lester Snow, Executive Director
 CALFED Bay-Delta Program
 P.O. Box 942836
 Sacramento, CA 94236-0001

Dear Mr. Snow:

I have been made aware that the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation has implemented a plan for riparian vegetation growth along the San Joaquin River between Friant and Mendota Pool. After reviewing this plan, I must express my concerns regarding this pilot program.

This program entails releasing water flows from June through October 1999 to promote the dispersal and germination of seeds from native riparian trees. This release would be done in an effort to encourage vegetative growth along the riverbanks. However, this pilot program will encourage seedlings to grow along the channel bottom, thus increasing the danger of flooding by positioning obstructions to the flow of water through the river. Having personally observed the damage done by the floods of 1997 and 1998, I am unable to support a program that would allow such an obstruction of water flow. While I have no objection to the development of riparian vegetation along the banks of the river as a form of erosion control and levee strengthening, I do object to the release of these seedlings in the manner proposed. I believe this will only increase the risk of flooding as these trees mature.

There are two issues of major concern regarding the San Joaquin River. One is the restoration of vegetative growth along the riverbanks to ensure the integrity of the levees. The other is flood control. Both issues are interdependent. This project only addresses the issue of vegetation restoration. Any program under consideration should also address the issue of flood control or the results will prove devastating.

Flood prevention must be a priority for all of us who are concerned with the protection of lives and property as well as the efficient utilization of the San Joaquin River. I am currently exploring alternatives for flood control such as implementing a state prisoner work program for brush eradication in the channels. This measure would not only increase the capacity of the


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channels to carry floodwaters but also encourage vegetative growth along the banks for erosion control. Most significantly, this is a proposal that addresses both issues.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my strong opposition to the riparian vegetation restoration program. This pilot program only increases the possibility and likelihood of future flooding and would be devastating to the businesses, homes and people who live and work in the area of the San Joaquin River and its tributaries. I find this unacceptable and implementation of this project should be stalled until the issue of flood control is addressed.

On behalf of my constituency, I would like to thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dick Monteith", with a stylized flourish at the end.

DICK MONTEITH
Senator, 12th District

DM: slp

cc: Ms. Paula Landis, P.E., U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Mr. Pete Rabbon, General Manager, The Reclamation Board
Ms. Margorie Marino
Mr. Reggie Hill, San Joaquin Levee District